

**The Pain of Pleasure: New Year's in Song Kaifeng:**  
**A Lecture by Prof. Steven H. West 奚如谷**

As part of its ongoing Chinese Studies Lecture Series, on October 14, 2011, the National Central Library invited Prof. Stephen H. West to the Houston TECO Culture Center (the Houston branch of Taiwan Academy) to give a lecture. Prof. West's lecture was entitled *The Pain of Pleasure: New Year's in Song Kaifeng*. Prof. West obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, was formerly a professor of Chinese and East Asian language and culture UC Berkeley, and is currently director of the Center for Asian Research at Arizona State University. He is currently researching Chinese drama and cultural history from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is an expert in medieval Chinese history and East-West comparative literature. Prof. West is an important figure in American sinology, and renowned for his research on Yuan and Ming dynasty drama.

In his lecture, Prof. West read several Northern Song texts describing new year celebrations in Kaifeng. In these works, the writer/poet divided the celebrations held between the Winter Solstice and the Lantern Festival into two parts. The first part describes in intricate detail the Emperor's visits to the Temple of Heaven, the Five Sacred Mountains and Shangqing Temple, and also the celebratory activities held by the imperial palace and Kaifeng court at the Xuande Pavilion. The second part describes the scenes of city residents' eating, drinking, and merrymaking following the close of the official celebrations. Prof. West dissects the new year celebrations in Northern Song Kaifeng from a unique viewpoint, offering the research community a new perspective and presenting those attending the lecture with a different vision of the times.



Prof. Stephen H. West, Arizona State University